

INTRODUCTION

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), in implementing the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000, initiated far-reaching programs and policies that will affect how every level of government approaches emergency management. The legislation reinforces the importance of hazard mitigation planning and assigns certain responsibilities to state governments, which also apply to its territories such as the US Virgin Islands.

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The underlying purpose of the United States Virgin Islands Territorial Hazard Mitigation Plan is to identify strategies and actions that can be taken before a disaster strikes that can greatly reduce the human suffering, damage to property, and the long-term economic impact of natural hazards.

OVERVIEW OF PLAN UPDATE

States and territories are required to prepare and submit a mitigation plan and then review and update the plan on a three year planning cycle. The Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency (VITEMA) has established a Hazard Mitigation Steering Committee as well as three Island Hazard Mitigation Committees - one each on the islands of St. Thomas, St. Croix and St. John - to provide oversight and assist in the Plan Update process.

Table 1.1 *Summary of the 2011 Plan Update*

Plan Section	Plan Update
Introduction	The introduction has been updated to indicate the purpose of the Plan Update. It also acknowledges key contributors to the Plan Update.
Section One - Adoption	An updated adoption letter has been included for signature and adoption of the Plan Update by the Governor of the Virgin Islands.
Section Two – Planning Process	This section has been updated to reflect the planning process involved in this Plan Update. This included the description and summary of several meetings with the Hazard Mitigation Steering Committee, the island specific Hazard Mitigation Committees, key stakeholders and public.
Section Three – Capability Assessment	This section was updated based on the findings of an assessment to evaluate USVI agency capabilities to implement the various hazard mitigation actions. This consisted of interviews with identified stakeholders to achieve the stated hazard mitigation goals and objectives. Key updates include removal of references to the Comprehensive Land and Water Use Plan, which is determined to be

“dead-on-arrival” and will no longer be pursued by the DPNR. New references were included to new planning initiatives including the update of zoning and subdivision legislation. New NFIP data on repetitive losses has been included in the section as well as statistics from the Permit Department of DPNR. The limited capacity of VITEMA to implement the entire suite of hazard mitigation actions in the 2008 Plan was discussed and recommendations made for a more realistic hazard mitigation strategy for the next three year planning cycle.

Section Four – Risk Assessment

This section has been updated to reflect changes in the Risk Assessment. It outlines the hazard identification process which includes description of an evaluation process utilized to identify hazards for further study in this Plan Update. It includes a summary of data that has been utilized for this Plan Update. This includes inventory information along with data and maps that were developed in the hazard profile. New profile information was added for coastal erosion, which was integrated into the discussion on coastal flooding. New profiles and maps were developed for drought, wildfire and rain-induced landslides. This information was used to update the vulnerability assessment. All the data, with the exception of drought information, was compiled to update loss estimates.

Section Five - Mitigation Strategy

This section of the Plan Update was based on a detailed review of the goals, objectives and actions contained in the 2008 Plan update. The assessment of the mitigation strategy was based on the findings of the hazard identification and risk assessment and the capability assessment. This assessment resulted in the postponement of Goal 2, which focused on integrating hazard mitigation and sustainable development into planning, owing to human resources and operational budget constraints at VITEMA. This resulted in a substantial reduction in the number of programmatic actions. Island specific mitigation actions were updated and focused on the implementation of hard projects to reduce the risk to hazards identified by the island specific Hazard Mitigation Committees. A Severe Repetitive Loss Strategy was updated and added this Plan Update as an appendix. Many of the mitigation actions identified in this Plan Update are focused on reducing repetitive losses, primarily from flooding.

Section Six – Plan Maintenance

A detailed description of the maintenance process is contained in this section of the Plan Update. This includes information concerning the composition of the hazard mitigation committees and the responsibilities of each in the maintenance of this newly updated Plan.

Section Seven - Bibliography

This section was updated to reflect new references that were utilized in the Plan Update. It provides an inventory of resources, materials and sources of relevant information utilized in this Plan Update.

The Plan Update was completed through an extensive planning process. The Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency (VITEMA) was designated as the lead agency for the Plan Update. Various USVI departments and authorities actively participated in its development.

The Plan Update describes processes and methods that were utilized in the revise of each section of the Plan. Of primary importance, was interagency participation in the planning process along with extensive public outreach efforts, which included both meetings and public workshops. These efforts led to the Update of the hazard mitigation strategy that seeks to implement both programmatic as well as island specific actions for the US Virgin Islands.

This Update, like its predecessor, seeks to serve a number of purposes, including:

- Promote interagency coordination of programs, policies and practices regarding hazard mitigation opportunities;
- Enhance public awareness and understanding of hazards that affect communities and actions the public can take to make themselves safer;
- Identify, evaluate and prioritize a range of mitigation actions that are specific to St. Thomas, St. Croix, and St. John;
- Comply with federal program requirements regarding eligibility for disaster recovery and mitigation grant funding.

This Update was prepared to meet all applicable state mitigation plan requirements as outlined in the Interim Final Rule for DMA 2000, published in the Federal Register on February 26, 2002, at 44 CFR Part 201 and 206.

VITEMA gratefully acknowledges the efforts of the departmental representatives for their participation as members of the Hazard Mitigation Committees (HMC) on each major island, along with the numerous private sector and community representatives who gave their time and support to this undertaking. The complete list of Committee members is included in Section 2.0

DEFINITIONS, ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

This section provides the definitions of all acronyms and abbreviations used in the document.

JFLH	Juan F. Luis Hospital
SRMC	Schneider Regional Medical Center
WAPA	Water and Power Authority
CLWUP	Comprehensive Land and Water Use Plan
ARC	American Red Cross
BCA	Benefit Cost Area
BCR	Benefit Cost Ratio
BEA	Bureau of Economic Analysis
BFE	Base Flood Elevation
CDBG	Community Development Block Grant
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CIPA	Council for Information and Planning Alternatives
CRBA	Coastal Resource Barrier Act
DOA	Department of Agriculture
DMA 2000	Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000
DPW	Department of Public Works
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DPNR	Department of Planning and Natural Resources
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FHBM	Flood Hazard Boundary Map
DFIRM	Digital Flood Insurance Rate Map
FIS	Flood Insurance Study
FMA	Flood Mitigation Assistance Program
FMV	Fair Market Value
GAR	Governor's Authorized Representative for Hazard Mitigation
GIS	Geographic Information System
HAZUS	Hazards United States
HMGP	Hazard Mitigation Grant Program
HUD	Housing and Urban Development
HPR	Department of Housing, Parks and Recreation
HMTAP	Hazard Mitigation Technical Assistance Program
HMC	Hazard Mitigation Committee
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NFIA	National Flood Insurance Act
NFIP	National Insurance Program
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

PDM	Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program
SLOSH	Sea, Lake and Overland Surges from Hurricanes
STAPLEE	Social, Technical, Administrative, Political, Legal, Economic and Environmental review criteria
VIFD	Virgin Islands Fire Department
VIPD	Virgin Islands Police Department
VITEMA	Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency

